

Applied Research: Mixed Methods in Political Inquiry

POL 415/PUB 615 | Fall 2022

Tuesday/Thursday | 6:30 p.m. – 7:45 p.m. | Zoom

Instructor: Joseph Cerrone

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Office Hours: By appointment

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Course Description

Public policy scholars and practitioners have a wide variety of methodological tools at their disposal. Yet, it can be challenging to determine which techniques are best equipped to answer particular research questions, as well as how to fruitfully combine distinct methods. Gaining a familiarity with the discipline’s vast methodological “toolkit” is essential to building the knowledge and skills necessary to engage in political and social research— for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners.

In this course, students will explore the principle methodological approaches employed in political inquiry—encompassing experimental, quantitative-statistical, and qualitative techniques—and examine how these tools may be productively “mixed” to make descriptive and causal inferences about political phenomena. In addition to learning to evaluate and critique distinct methodological approaches, students will “learn by doing” and gain experience applying various techniques to answer specific research questions. Students will apply these skills and techniques in the context of a semester-long research project. This project should form the basis of a graduate-level thesis or article manuscript prepared for presentation at an academic conference.

Learning Outcomes

As a result of completing this course, students will be able to:

- ❖ Understand and critique experimental, quantitative-statistical, and qualitative research methods and techniques;
- ❖ Conduct statistical analysis in R and RStudio;
- ❖ Code and analyze data in NVivo;
- ❖ Develop and carry out a research project in political science; and
- ❖ Prepare a scholarly manuscript that can serve as the basis for a graduate-level thesis or conference presentation.

Course Materials

There are two required textbooks for this course, which can be rented or purchased from a variety of online booksellers:

- ❖ Baglione, Lisa A. 2019. *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science: A Practical Guide to Inquiry, Structure, and Methods*, 4th edition. Washington, DC: Sage.
- ❖ Gerring, John. 2012. *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework*, 2nd edition. New York: Cambridge University Press.

All other required readings are available on Canvas.

Technology

Students must download [R](#) and [RStudio](#) to their personal computer. Please consult the instructor if you have any difficulty doing so.

Assignments

There are three assignments for this course:

- ❖ Participation (20%)
- ❖ Research Project (60%)
- ❖ Peer Feedback (20%)

Participation (20%)

It is important to come to class prepared to actively participate in discussions and activities. Participation can take many forms, including asking questions, answering questions, and engaging in group conversations. Participation will be assessed by both the frequency and the quality of students' contributions. Unless otherwise noted, students are expected to turn on their cameras during class—please speak with the instructor during the first week of the semester if there are extenuating circumstances that make this difficult.

Research Project (60%)

Over the course of the semester, students will develop and execute a research project on a topic related to political science or public policy. The project will be completed in several parts:

❖ **Question and Concept (10%) – September 8**

This component of the project asks students to identify a research question and core concept under study. This 3–5 page assignment should accomplish three goals: (1) clearly articulate a research question and justify why it is interesting and important; (2) clearly define the core

concept under study and review alternative conceptualizations in the literature; and (3) clearly explain how the concept will be measured and review alternative measurement strategies.

❖ **Literature Review and Theory (10%) – October 6**

This component of the project asks students to review and critique how the literature answers the research question and then propose their own answer. This 5–10 page assignment should emphasize why existing explanations are insufficient and how the new explanation offers a better answer to the research question.

❖ **Research Design (10%) – October 27**

This component of the project asks students to develop a research design for how they will empirically assess their argument. This 3–5 page assignment should accomplish two goals: (1) clearly articulate how all key variables will be defined and measured, including how data will be collected; and (2) explain the methodological approach adopted and the specific tools or techniques to be used to analyze the data.

❖ **First Draft (0%) – November 10**

This component of the project asks students to combine the previous assignments into the structure of an article manuscript. Preliminary empirical findings should also be added. This assignment will serve as the basis for peer review and will not be graded.

❖ **Research Presentation (10%) – November 29; December 1; December 6; December 8**

Scholars regularly present their work at academic conferences and workshops to solicit feedback and improve their research. During the final two weeks of the semester students will give 10-minute presentations to share their research with the class.

❖ **Final Paper (20%) – December 13**

This component of the project asks students to draft a full article manuscript, including revised versions of the previous components and the empirical results obtained from the data analysis. This paper should be approximately 20–30 pages and should be of the quality required for presentation at an academic conference.

Peer Feedback (20%)

Giving constructive and helpful feedback is an important and valuable part of scholarship. At two points during the semester, students will practice providing supportive, critical feedback to their peers.

❖ **Peer-Review Report (10%) – November 17**

Peer review is a central aspect of the scholarly research and publication process. We will simulate the peer-review process with an in-class peer review session on November 17. Prior to class, students must read a peer's draft paper and write a peer-review report with constructive criticism aimed at strengthening the project. Pairs will be assigned the week before class.

❖ **Discussant Remarks (10%) – November 29; December 1; December 6; December 8**

At academic conferences and workshops, scholars often serve as discussants to provide verbal feedback on the papers presented. To simulate this role, each student will be responsible for serving as the discussant for one of the Research Presentations at the end of the semester.

Course Policies

Covid-19 Precautions

Students are required to follow all health and safety guidelines set forth by the university and the City of Philadelphia. The university's policies can be found on the [Hawk Hill Ahead](#) website.

Absences

Students should plan to attend and participate in all class sessions. Students will be given two free absences, after which their grade will be adversely affected. In the case of an absence, students should ensure they keep up with the class readings and consult another student for class notes. If you plan to be absent in order to observe a religious holiday, please inform the instructor during the first week of the semester—any such absences will be excused without penalty.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to be familiar with the [Academic Honesty Policy](#) and the [Student Handbook](#). Academic dishonesty or other violations of the codes will be reported to the university and will be penalized. Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.

Canvas

Course materials—including the syllabus, assignment instructions, tutorial videos, and additional resources—are posted on Canvas. Students should regularly check Canvas and their SJU email address for class updates. All assignments must be submitted on Canvas.

Classroom Conduct

All students are responsible for contributing to a professional, scholarly, and welcoming classroom environment. Rudeness, intolerance, or discrimination of any kind will not be tolerated.

Extensions and Late Assignments

Please consult the instructor about an extension before the deadline if you need extra time to complete an assignment. Requests for an extension following the deadline will not be granted. Late assignments will be penalized one-third of a letter grade each day they are late.

Use of Electronic Class Material

Students are encouraged to use electronic course materials for private personal use in connection with their academic program of study. Electronic course materials should not be shared or used for non-course related purposes unless express permission has been granted by the instructor. Students who impermissibly share any electronic course materials are subject to discipline under the [Student Handbook](#). Please contact the instructor if you have questions regarding what constitutes permissible or impermissible use of electronic course materials.

Workload

Students are expected to spend a minimum of 100 minutes on independent coursework for every 50 minutes of direct instruction per week. This course meets for 2 hours and 30 minutes of direct instruction per week, meaning students are expected to spend 5 hours of independent learning per week. This totals a minimum of 7.5 hours of learning per week.

Resources

Counseling and Psychological Services

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) promotes the psychological wellbeing of Saint Joseph's University students through the provision of a variety of therapeutic interventions and outreach programs. For additional information, call 610-660-1090 or see [here](#).

Office of Student Disability Services

Reasonable academic accommodations may be provided to students who submit appropriate documentation of their disability. If students have need of assistance or questions with this issue, they are encouraged to contact the Office of Student Disability Services (SDS) at sds@sju.edu or by phone at 610-660-1774. SDS also provides an appeal/grievance procedure for complaints regarding requested or offered reasonable accommodations. More information can be found [here](#).

Francis A. Drexel Library and Post Learning Commons

The [Francis A. Drexel Library and Post Learning Commons](#) offers a vast array of digital and print resources to support student learning. These include a [Political Science Research Guide](#) and [Citation Styles Guide](#).

Writing Center

The [Writing Center](#) offers writing support to students through one-on-one consultations. Appointments can be made [here](#).

Course Schedule

August 23 – Introduction

Overview: How will we approach the study of mixed-methods research over the course of the semester?

Readings: 15 pages

- ❖ Syllabus
 - ❖ COMPLETE: Introductory Survey
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August 25 – Mixed-Methods Research

Overview: What are the advantages of mixed-methods research? What different approaches to mixed-methods research are common in political science?

Readings: 43 pages

- ❖ Brookes, Marissa. 2017. “The Road Less Traveled: An Agenda for Mixed-Methods Research.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 50(4): 1015–1018.
 - ❖ Seawright, Jason. 2016. “Chapter 1: Integrative Multi-Method Research.” In *Multi-Method Social Science: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Tools*. New York: Cambridge University Press. ****Read pp. 1–10, stop at Section 1.3.****
 - ❖ Gerring. “Chapter 4: Analyses.”
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August 30 – Research Questions Workshop

Overview: How do social scientists develop interesting research questions?

Readings: 40 pages

- ❖ Baglione. “Chapter 1: So You Have to Write a Research Paper.”
 - ❖ Baglione. “Chapter 2: Getting Started: Finding a Research Question.”
 - ❖ COMPLETE: Send 3 potential research questions to Joe before class
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September 1 – Descriptive Inference I: Concepts

Overview: Why are concepts central to social science research? What are the characteristics of a strong conceptualization? How does reviewing the literature aid in conceptualization and theory-building?

Readings: 67 pages

- ❖ Gerring. “Chapter 5: Concepts.”
 - ❖ Baglione. “Chapter 4: Making Sense of the Scholarly Answers to Your Research Question.”
 - ❖ Baglione. “Chapter 5: Effectively Distilling Your Argument.”
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September 6 – Descriptive Inference II: Measurement

Overview: What are different measurement strategies adopted in social science research? What are the advantages and disadvantages of various approaches?

Readings: 72 pages

- ❖ Gerring. “Chapter 7: Measurements.”
 - ❖ Baglione. “Chapter 7: Making Your Plan and Protecting Yourself from Criticism.”
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September 8 – Causal Inference I

Overview: What is causal inference? How does the Potential Outcomes Framework understand causality? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this approach?

Readings: 38 pages

- ❖ Seawright, Jason. 2016. “Chapter 2: Causation as a Shared Standard.” In *Multi-Method Social Science: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Tools*. New York: Cambridge University Press. ****Read pp. 19–31, stop at Section 2.2.****
- ❖ Gerring. “Chapter 8: Causal Arguments.”
- ❖ Gerring. “Chapter 9: Causal Analyses.” ****Read only pp. 224–230.****

Question and Concept – Due September 8 at 6:30 p.m.

September 13 – Causal Inference II

Overview: What characteristics define strong causal inferences? What are the most common threats to causal inference? How does research design contribute to strong causal inference?

Readings: 53 pages

- ❖ Gerring. “Chapter 9: Causal Analyses.” ***Read only pp. 231–255.***
 - ❖ Gerring. “Chapter 11: Causal Strategies: Beyond X and Y.” ***Read only pp. 291–299.***
 - ❖ Baglione. “Chapter 8: Evaluating the Argument.”
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September 15 – Foundations of Experimental Research

Overview: What are experiments? What core assumptions underlie experimental (causal) inference? What are the advantages and disadvantages of experiments in social science research?

Readings: 64 pages

- ❖ Gerring. “Chapter 10: Causal Strategies: X and Y.” ***Read “Randomized Designs” on pp. 258–273.***
 - ❖ Gerber, Alan S., and Donald P. Green. 2012. “Chapter 1: Introduction” and “Chapter 2: Causal Inference and Experimentation.” In *Field Experiments: Design, Analysis, and Interpretation*. New York: W. W. Norton.
 - ❖ Herman, Biz, et al. 2022. “Field Experiments in the Global South: Assessing Risks, Localizing Benefits, and Addressing Positionality.” *PS: Political Science & Politics*: 1–4.
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September 20 – Applications of Experimental Research

Overview: How have scholars used experiments to study a variety of issues of interest to social scientists? What types of experiments have they used? What are their strengths and weaknesses?

Readings: 33 pages

- ❖ Dolan, Kathleen, and Kira Sanbonmatsu. 2011. “Candidate Gender and Experimental Political Science.” In *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*, eds. James N. Druckman, Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- ❖ McClendon, Gwyneth H. 2014. “Social Esteem and Participation in Contentious Politics: A Field Experiment at an LGBT Pride Rally.” *American Political Science Review* 58(2): 279–90.
 - ❖ Crowder-Meyer, Melody, Shana Kushner Gadarian, and Jessica Trounstein. 2021. “RCV Is Neither Panacea nor Catastrophe for Minority Representation.” *New America*. March 1.
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September 22 – Introduction to R and RStudio

Overview: What are R and RStudio? How do they facilitate research?

Readings:

- ❖ WATCH: Introduction to R/RStudio Tutorial Videos
- ❖ COMPLETE: Introduction to R/RStudio Handout

Additional Resources:

- ❖ Wickham, Hadley, and Garrett Grolemund. 2017. [R for Data Science](#).
 - ❖ [RStudio Cheatsheets](#)
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September 27 – Descriptive Statistics I

Overview: What core mathematical and statistical principles underlie quantitative-statistical research?

Readings: 24 pages

- ❖ Stokes, Susan. C. 2014. “A Defense of Observational Research.” In *Field Experiments and Their Critics*, ed. Dawn Langan Teele. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- ❖ WATCH: Descriptive Statistics I Tutorial Videos
- ❖ COMPLETE: Descriptive Statistics I Handout

Additional Resources:

- ❖ Kunin, Daniel, Jingru Guo, Tyler Dae Devlin, and Daniel Xiang. 2022. [Seeing Theory: A Visual Introduction to Probability and Statistics](#).
 - ❖ Diez, David M., Mina Çetinkaya-Rundel, and Christopher D. Barr. 2019. *OpenIntro Statistics*.
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September 29 – Descriptive Statistics II

Overview: What core mathematical and statistical principles underlie quantitative-statistical research?

Readings:

- ❖ WATCH: Descriptive Statistics II Tutorial Videos
 - ❖ COMPLETE: Descriptive Statistics II Handout
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October 4 – Linear Regression I

Overview: How can OLS regressions be run in R? What does the output from OLS regressions mean?

Readings: 13 pages

- ❖ Rohrer, Julia M. 2018. “Thinking Clearly About Correlations and Causation: Graphical Causal Models for Observational Data.” *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science* 1(1): 27–42. *Skip “Genetic Confounding and Control by Design” on pp. 33–34.*
 - ❖ WATCH: Linear Regression I Tutorial Videos
 - ❖ COMPLETE: Linear Regression I Handout
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October 6 – Linear Regression II

Overview: How can OLS regressions be run in R? What does the output from OLS regressions mean?

Readings: 4 pages

- ❖ Wasserstein, Ronald L. and Nicole A. Lazar. 2016. “The ASA Statement on p -Values: Context, Process, and Purpose.” *The American Statistician* 70(2): 129–133.
- ❖ WATCH: Linear Regression II Tutorial Videos
- ❖ COMPLETE: Linear Regression II Handout

Literature Review and Theory – Due October 6 at 6:30 p.m.

October 11 – Fall Break (No Class)

October 13 – Fall Break (No Class)

October 18 – Data Visualization

Overview: What principles underlie good data visualization? How does the R package “ggplot2” enable high-quality data visualization?

Readings: 36 pages

- ❖ Elliott, Kennedy. 2016. [“39 Studies About Human Perception in 30 Minutes.”](#) *Medium*.
- ❖ COMPLETE: Data Visualization Handout

Additional Resources:

- ❖ Wickham, Hadley, and Garrett Golemund. 2017. [“Chapter 3: Data Visualization.”](#) *R for Data Science*.
 - ❖ Wickham, Hadley, and Garrett Golemund. 2017. [“Chapter 28: Graphics for Communication.”](#) *R for Data Science*.
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October 20 – Foundations of Qualitative Research

Overview: What principles underlie qualitative research? What is process tracing and how does it approach the question of causal inference?

Readings: 34 pages

- ❖ Mahoney, James. 2010. “After KKV: The New Methodology of Qualitative Research.” *World Politics* 62(1): 120–147.
 - ❖ Collier, David. 2011. “Understanding Process Tracing.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44(4): 823–830.
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October 25 – Qualitative Coding

Overview: What is coding in qualitative text analysis? What are the principle characteristics of strong coding schemes?

Readings: 44 pages

- ❖ Schreier, Margrit. 2012. "Chapter 4: The Coding Frame." In *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
 - ❖ Schreier, Margrit. 2012. "Chapter 11: How to Present Your Results." In *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
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October 27 – NVivo I

Overview: What is NVivo? How does it facilitate qualitative text analysis?

Readings:

- ❖ WATCH: NVivo I Tutorial Videos
- ❖ COMPLETE: NVivo I Handout

Research Design – Due October 27 at 6:30 p.m.

November 1 – NVivo II

Overview: What is NVivo? How does it facilitate qualitative text analysis?

Readings:

- ❖ WATCH: NVivo II Tutorial Videos
 - ❖ COMPLETE: NVivo II Handout
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November 3 – Student Choice Session

Overview: TBD

Readings:

- ❖ TBD

November 8 – Student Choice Session

Overview: TBD

Readings:

- ❖ TBD
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November 10 – Strategies for Mixing Methods

Overview: How can different methods be productively mixed? What are the advantages of the integrative approach over the traditional triangulation approach?

Readings: 85 pages

- ❖ Seawright Jason. 2016. “Better Multimethod Design: The Promise of Integrative Multimethod Research.” *Security Studies* 25(1): 42–49.
- ❖ Paluck, Elizabeth Levy. 2010. “The Promising Integration of Qualitative Methods and Field Experiments.” *Annals of the American Academy for Political and Social Science*: 1–27.
- ❖ De Micheli, David. 2021. “Racial Reclassification and Political Identity Formation.” *World Politics* 73(1): 1–51.

First Draft – Due November 10 at 6:30 p.m.

November 15 – Research Ethics and Transparency

Overview: What ethical obligations arise in the course of social science research? How can scholars best fulfill their ethical responsibilities to their subjects, their peers, and the public?

Readings: 26 pages

- ❖ Fujii, Lee Ann. 2012. “Research Ethics 101: Dilemmas and Responsibilities.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 45(4): 717–723.
- ❖ McDermott, Rose. 2013. “The Ten Commandments of Experiments.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 46(3): 605–610.

- ❖ Aschwanden, Christie. 2015. "Science Isn't Broken." *FiveThirtyEight*. August 19.
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November 17 – Peer-Review Workshop

Overview: What are the strengths of your peer's project? How can it be improved?

Readings: 28 pages

- ❖ Baglione. "Chapter 6: Revising and Editing Your Work."
- ❖ Baglione. "Chapter 9: Bringing the Paper Together in Essential Ways."

Peer-Review Report – Due November 17 at 6:30 p.m.

November 22 – Research Day (No Class)

November 24 – Thanksgiving (No Class)

November 29 – Research Presentations

December 1 – Research Presentations

December 6 – Research Presentations

December 8 – Research Presentations

December 13 – Final Papers Due (No Class)
